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ABSTRACT

Discussed is the development of the Educational Resources Center Model, a mainstreamed support services program for mildly handicapped (emotionally handicapped, physically handicapped, educable mentally retarded, or severely learning disabled) children in Jackson County, Oregon. Explained are the model's six components: a mainstreaming orientation, individualized instruction, observation of each student for behavior analysis, daily monitoring, daily progress records, and a cross categorical approach. Based on students' academic progress and responses of teachers to questionnaires, the model is seen to be successful. (SBH)

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PERSONNEL TRAINING TO FACILITATE MAINSTREAMING

The Educational Resource Centers Model

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CEC PRESENTATION

The goal of this presentation is to discuss the development from 1971 through 1977 of the Educational Resource Centers Model, a mainstreamed support services program for mildly handicapped children. The procedures and results of this ESEA, Title III/Title IV project will be discussed.

The Educational Resource Centers Model was developed in Jackson County, a rural area in southwestern Oregon. Jackson County is made up of 10 school districts which range in size from 21 to 11,000 students. In 1971, the county had a typical special education program for Oregon in that it provided self-contained classroom service for educable mentally retarded and multi-handicapped students. Other available support services included speech therapy and Title I reading programs. However, no support services were available for students with emotional handicaps, physical handicaps, or learning disabilities.

Special education staff in Jackson County were very concerned about the lack of services for so many mildly handicapped children. The majority of these children were being inadequately served by classroom teachers who felt frustrated by their inability to teach these students. In addition, staff was extremely concerned about the issue of labeling children. In 1971, Oregon's procedure for serving handicapped children included certification by the state. This certification effectively labeled the child by his/her handicapping condition, and there were no formal procedures by which this label could be removed from the child's file at the state or local level. There were also some children who had been mislabeled in an effort to assist them in getting any support service at all. These very practical concerns, plus our awareness of civil rights actions around the issue of

free appropriate services for handicapped children and pending state legislation led to the development of a Title VI program, Diagnostic Resource Centers. This program, which was conducted during the 1971-72 school year on a pilot basis, began to meet some of Jackson County's service needs as it was cross-categorical in nature. That is, it served children who were eligible for service in Oregon as emotionally handicapped, physically handicapped, educable mentally retarded, or as having extreme learning problems.

By our definition of mainstreaming, this program was an integrated program in that the children were in a special education setting and attended some regular classes with permission from the classroom teacher. At the end of our first year of operation in an integrated cross-categorical model, we were not satisfied with our project. Our students were spending approximately one-third of their time in regular class activities and, while this was an improvement for some students, others had formerly spent a full day in regular class placement and therefore were now more segregated. In addition, while students did make good academic progress in the Diagnostic Resource Center, our subjective impression was that there had been no attitude change on the part of classroom teaching staff or the students. Everyone was well aware that the students involved belonged to the special education program, not the classes they visited for physical education, music or art.

Based on the results of our pilot year, a new project was written for ESEA, Title III/Title IV funds for innovative and exemplary programs. With the assistance of this funding over the last four years, Jackson County has developed its current Educational Resource Centers Model. The current program is based on two developmental years, a year of validation in which

the project was run in two other districts in Oregon, and our current dissemination year in which the project results are being made available to other districts in the Northwest.

The Educational Resource Centers Model is comprised of six components which we feel have been critical to its success. The first of these is our mainstreaming orientation which Herb discussed. For the purposes of our project, mainstreaming is defined as the placement of a handicapped pupil in a regular class as their homeroom, with the provision of appropriate educational support for both the pupil and his/her teacher. Under this approach, all mildly handicapped children in Jackson County are placed in regular class homerooms at the appropriate grade level. As is demonstrated in this definition, our view of mainstreaming does not include the dumping of handicapped students in regular classrooms or elimination of support services. Our goal is to place the child in the least restrictive school environment in which he/she can meet with success. We feel that this requires a flexible continuum of services.

A second critical component of the Educational Resource Centers project is individualized instruction. The concept of individualized instruction recognizes children's differences and takes into account that learning is incremental and that different children learn at different rates. For our project, individualized instruction also implies the development of prescriptive programs, which are developed on completion of diagnostic testing. After this testing, individually developed prescriptive programs are written which include the procedural and sequential components of instruction. These prescriptive programs are based on individually determined objectives such as this:

II. MATH: Completes addition and subtraction sequences (with regrouping) by June, 1977.

A. Adds 2-place addition problems with carrying with 90% accuracy on the R.R.C. Math Inventory by November 30, 1976.

B. Writes answers to simple 1-digit addition problems at a frequency of 40 digits per minute with 2 or less errors by November 30, 1976.

These objectives are generally written by ERC staff based on skill deficits identified by classroom teachers. The specificity of the classroom teachers' requests varies depending on their skill in writing objectives.

Another critical component of the ERC is that observation of each child be conducted for the purpose of a behavior analysis. This assists us in specifying performance indicators for both social and academic behaviors. It includes the identification of antecedents and consequences for behaviors which the referring teacher wishes to have decelerated or accelerated.

Once objectives are set for students and prescriptive programs implemented, daily monitoring occurs to assist the staff in making effective and efficient decisions for students. Progress is recorded daily on each program in reference to criteria for advancement or alteration of the program.

Lastly, the Educational Resource Centers Model is cross-categorical. All students within our service area who are eligible for assistance under Oregon definition of educable mentally retarded, emotionally handicapped, physically handicapped or extreme learning problems, are served through the Educational Resource Centers Model. All students are mainstreamed, but a flexible continuum of services is maintained by individual determination of each student's program, schedule and length of ERC service daily.

During our developmental and validation years, 1972-75, five Educational Resource Centers were implemented within the state of Oregon. Each of these Centers was located in a classroom in an elementary school and was staffed with a trained and certified special education teacher and a teacher aide. During this period, a number of process and product objectives were developed and monitored regularly under an evaluation contract with the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, Audit and Evaluation Section, Portland, Oregon. Project goals for these years were as follows:

1. 100% of served students will spend 25% of their time in regular class activities.
2. 50% of served students will spend 75% of their time in regular class activities.
3. 75% of served students will acquire requested academic and social skills.

Over the three years of development and validation, the objectives were met as follows:

Objective #1 was passed.

Objective #2 was passed.

And regarding these, I might add that the success of regular class time was determined by the classroom teacher, who had the option of increasing or decreasing the student's Resource Center time whenever they felt it necessary.

Objective #3 was failed as we have averaged 70% rather than 75% success with the individual objectives written for students. These objectives are written and renegotiated with classroom teachers on a quarterly basis

and range from three to fifteen objectives per student. To pass an objective, the student must have passed both posttests administered by the Resource Centers teacher.

Looking back at our project results over the developmental and validation years, the project staff feel that the mainstreamed approach has been successful. After enrollment, time spent in regular class settings by our handicapped students was at the option of classroom teachers. We feel that the high degree of participation by classroom teachers has made our measure of time spent in classroom settings an appropriate one. Within the Resource Centers Model, classroom teachers make referrals to the Center, cooperatively select the student's goals and objectives with the ERC staff, schedule the student's time in the Resource Center and have the option of reviewing students' progress on a weekly and quarterly basis.

Based on posttest results from individually selected objectives, students have made good academic progress in the Resource Center. As the majority of the objectives cooperatively determined by classroom teachers and ERC staff were criterion referenced and not standardized, I have very little standardized test data to report. However, on our double pre/double posttest model, students passed an average of 70% of their objectives each quarter.

Perhaps one of the most critical issues regarding mainstreaming is how classroom teachers feel about it. Based on questionnaires administered to classroom teachers in Jackson County at our validation sites, they did prefer the Educational Resource Centers Model over self-contained service. Results of the Spring, 1976, teacher attitude questionnaire as as follows:

...80% of teachers responding felt that children currently served by the Educational Resource Centers are best served by a combination of the ERC and classroom instruction.

...85% of responding teachers disagreed that children served by the ERC can best be served by classroom instruction alone and 68% disagreed that these children could best be served by Resource Centers alone, which would be the equivalent of a self-contained class.

...79% of the teachers felt that social contact with the regular students was beneficial for our exceptional students and 72% felt that the contact with the exceptional student was beneficial for the regular class student.

...57% of the teachers disagreed with the statement that having exceptional children in the regular classroom had the detrimental effect on the academic progress of regular students with another 17% being neutral on this question.

Based on these questionnaire results and additional comments by teachers, we feel that classroom teachers in Jackson County are pleased with this mainstreaming approach to education of mildly handicapped children.

A further significant issue is how exceptional and regular classroom children feel about mainstreamed programs. Unfortunately we have collected no objective data on this issue. We do have several anecdotal reports such as the one regarding a former student of ours, Cliff, who when asked his school history by a new volunteer, replied that last year he had been retarded, but this year he was a 4th grader. We feel that this attitude,

which implies that you can't be a regular student and a handicapped student at the same time, is prevalent among our students.

During the current year, the first of two planned years of dissemination, approximately 20 Educational Resource Centers have been begun around the state in 10 school districts. Our project has provided initial and follow-up training to adopters, internships where teacher trainees may spend three days in training at our original sites, and an Adopter's Guide, Mainstreaming: The Educational Resource Centers Model, which is available through our office for a small fee.

In conclusion, during the past six years, I feel that Jackson County has developed an effective cross-categorical mainstreamed approach to the education of mildly handicapped children. At this point, there are approximately 30 Centers following our model operating in the state of Oregon, including Centers at the elementary, junior high and secondary level. Since the conclusion of our developmental project, we have added a series of products, most of which are discussed in our Adopter's Guide, including an "Objectives Bank" to assist teachers in determining goals for students. We hope to do further work in developing and implementing a student attitude measure and developing a data bank to assist our staff in predicting target dates for meeting objectives. This will include gathering information on the number of sessions necessary to reach criterion on most commonly used objectives.

Though we have developed what we feel to be a successful mainstreamed model for serving mildly handicapped children in Jackson County, we are accutely aware that we still have a long way to go. At this time, approximately 6% of the school population in Jackson County is receiving some special

support services. Based on national and state incidence figures, we believe there are many more children in Jackson County schools who are not yet receiving these services. The growth of the Educational Resource Centers program is dependent on local, state and federal resources. Therefore, we feel it will be a significant period of time before all children are receiving appropriate support services through their local education agency. In looking at these yet unserved children, the majority of them appear to be functioning marginally in regular class settings. Therefore, we have felt a need to develop strategies to train classroom teachers to assist them in meeting the needs of these handicapped children. This training, which has been requested over a period of time by both our special support staff and regular classroom teaching staff, comprises the second important element of our two-stage service model. The first stage, direct support to students and teachers, has been provided by the Educational Resource Centers. The second stage, training for classroom teachers, comprises the last section of this presentation.